

# Norwegian meets Mediterranean

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## Hirundo Maris brings Hardanger fiddle to French Catalonia in a harmonious blend



Photo: courtesy of Hirundo Maris  
Petter Udland Johansen with Hardanger fiddle and Arianna Savall with baroque triple harp.

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Last September, a Hardingfele (Hardanger fiddle) was played in a medieval church in French Catalonia, in a concert by three members of the Hirundo Maris ensemble that splices the Nordic and Mediterranean musical traditions.

The concert was the 34th of the Festival Musique Catalogne Romane (Catalan Romance Music Festival)\* series. The venue, the church of the Benedictine abbey of Saint-G enis-des-Fontaines, in the Pyr enes-Orientales Department of Mediterranean France, is one of the oldest in the country, first mentioned in the year 819.

Hirundo Maris is a relatively new ensemble, founded in 2009 by partners Petter Udland Johansen (1971-), an Oslo native Norwegian tenor, composer, and instrumentalist, and Arianna Savall (1972-), a Catalan soprano and harpist, the daughter of Jordi Savall (1941-), the Catalan conductor, viol player, and composer known for his performances and recordings of early Western music.

The name Hirundo Maris (Latin for "sea swallow"), mirrors the ensemble's approach to music. Just as the swallow is a species of birds found on all continents (save Antarctica), Hirundo Maris wings its way from North to South, from one period to another, interweaving Nordic and musical heritages in reflections on similarities and contrasts.



Photo: courtesy of L'Independant Catalan

Musicians at the Sept. 19 concert, from left to right: Petter Udland Johansen (Hardingfele), Arianna Savall (baroque triple harp), and Miguel Angel Cordero (double bass).

The concert included three Hardingfele solos by Johansen: a Norwegian folk song, "Eg veit i himmelrik ei borg" (I know there is a castle in heaven), "Meditation," and the Negro spiritual, "The Wayfaring Stranger."

Hirundo Maris often performs at festivals around Europe and as far to the east as Istanbul. Their CDs, from the first of 2012, *Chants du Sud et du Nord* (Amazon.com stocks it in two formats, [www.amazon.com/Hirundo-Maris-Chants-Sud-Nord/dp/B008HFDRTG](http://www.amazon.com/Hirundo-Maris-Chants-Sud-Nord/dp/B008HFDRTG)) have become classics of the Nordic-Mediterranean crossover genre.

*\* Programs of previous and forthcoming festivals published by Festival Musique Catalogne Romane, Place Salvador Allende, 66200 Elne, France.*

**Further reading:**

- Hirundo Maris website: [www.ariannasavall.com](http://www.ariannasavall.com) (selectable in English, French, Spanish, German, Italian, and Catalan), with biographies, discography, and videos of performances.
- "Hirundo Maris a fait un tabac" (Hirundo Maris sensational), article on the Sept. 19 concert in *L'Independant Catalan* (French regional newspaper), Sept. 29, 2017: [www.lindependant.fr/2017/09/28/hirundo-maris-a-fait-un-tabac,3055797.php](http://www.lindependant.fr/2017/09/28/hirundo-maris-a-fait-un-tabac,3055797.php) (French).

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